

## Healthy Ideas

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If you think you're stuck in the grief process, here are some tips:

### ◆ **Talk About It**

Share your feelings with someone you trust. Getting through grief is hard enough. Getting through it by yourself is extremely difficult.

### ◆ **Protect Your Future**

If at all possible, postpone making major life changes such as selling a house, changing jobs, or moving to a new city or state. If you can postpone these kinds of decisions until later, you'll be able to think more clearly. Give yourself time to recover from this loss before you have to make other adjustments. Of course, the flood may have forced some of these decisions already.

### ◆ **Avoid Isolation**

In the beginning, you may have to force yourself to engage in social contacts. That's normal. But don't let yourself get isolated. Friends really are good medicine.

And, if you find your old friends aren't able to help you through this difficult time, reach out to others. Use this time to broaden your world.

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### ◆ **Go With Your Strengths**

A famous gardener was asked to reveal the secret to his beautiful garden. His answer: Find out what grows in your garden and grow lots of it. The same approach is useful when you are grieving. Because your grief makes you feel helpless, it helps to think about your strengths and put them to work to help restore your self-confidence.

### ◆ **Take Care of Yourself**

During times of stress, your body is more susceptible to illness. So now, more than ever, it's important to eat a nutritious diet and get plenty of rest.

### ◆ **Keep Active**

Increasing physical activity, taking up old hobbies or exploring new ones, volunteering for a cause that helps remind you there are others going through difficult times as well can help you regain your ability to think clearly.

### ◆ **Nurture Your Sense of Humor**

Laughter makes people feel better. Finding humor during hard times promotes healing.

# Learning To Say Good-bye

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**Strategies for Coping with Loss**

# In the Amusement Park of Life, This Is the Roller Coaster

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From two great philosophers, we get insight into loss. Shakespeare tells us, "Parting is such sweet sorrow." Charlie Brown says, "Good grief!"

And from our own lives we know that learning to cope with loss—learning to say good-bye to someone or something we've loved and treasured—is one of life's hardest lessons.

So why is sorrow sweet and grief good? Because when we get to grief, we're starting on the road to healing.

While each person is different, we all go through some predictable phases when we deal with loss.

## **In the Beginning**

Remember the first hours? Common responses cover the field from crying to staring into space. From feeling agitated to not being able to move. From running around doing a million things at once to wandering around aimlessly.

Whatever you call it, high anxiety or emotional shock, it's the beginning of our journey through grief.

## **We Can't Believe It's Real**

Once the first emotional wave marches through us, we next try to cope with the pain by denying it.

## **Then We Get Mad About It**

We're human. And getting angry when we face situations that we can't control or understand is a very human response.

## **And Then We Try to Bargain**

It's real. There's no denying it has happened and getting angry didn't change anything. What's next?

We resort to *"Let's make a deal."* With ourselves or with our spiritual leader, we try to find a way to fix things to get past the pain. We try to drive bargains.

When we start having "if only" conversations with ourselves, we know we've entered another phase of the journey.

## **Because It Hurts So Badly**

All around us are memories of what we have lost. Our minds go back in time to better days. We recall special moments and feelings in our past. We begin to laugh and cry—sometimes at the same time. The past seems more real than reality. We wonder if we're losing our minds. But it's finally happened. We're ready to grieve.

## **And Sometimes We Wonder if There's Any Use in Going On**

Just when we think we're getting better, we suddenly feel overwhelmed with depression. We might even wonder what's the use in going on if life can't be the way it was. The sadness seems unbearable. The loss seems too profound.

## **And Then, It Gets Better Again**

Getting through loss is a roller coaster ride. This up and down cycle of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression is the way we work our way past loss. For how long?

Each person is unique, but counselors who help people through the grieving process tell us that it can take between 2 and 3 years.

## **And Our Lives Go On**

When we are ready, acceptance will come. That's when we can say at last, *"I can't change what has happened, but I can choose to put it behind me and get on with my life."*